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ABSTRACT

The teaching module contains questionnaires, a form for combining questionnaire responses, and seven data sheets dealing with costs and benefits of rearing children in the United States. Intended for use by students from junior high school through college, the materials encourage students to clarify their attitudes toward parenthood, help them examine advantages and disadvantages of having children, expose them to data on the cost of raising children, and help them understand the roles of culture and economy in shaping a society's perceptions of children. The first section outlines grade levels, time and materials, objectives, and procedures for utilizing the data sheets in class activities. The second section contains data sheets. The first data sheet poses six questions on the cost and value of children. The second data sheet provides a response form designed to facilitate collection and recording of questionnaire responses. Data sheets three, four, and five are graphs representing direct and indirect costs of children at various stages of the life cycle. The sixth data sheet tabulates results of a 1973 Hawaiian survey of advantages of parenthood. The final data sheet is a questionnaire which directs students to respond positively or negatively to 45 statements of opinion about children. (Author/DB)

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The Cost and Value of American Children

A Teaching Module

by

Leon E. Clark

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THE COST AND VALUE OF AMERICAN CHILDREN

Grade Level	Junior High School—College
Time Needed	One hour; two hours if Data Sheet 7 is used
Materials	Questionnaires for all students (Data Sheet 1) One <i>Response Form</i> for each discussion group (Data Sheet 2) Transparencies (or copies) of Data Sheets 3, 4, 5, and 6
Goal	To encourage students to clarify their attitudes toward parenthood; to help them examine the advantages and disadvantages of having children; to expose students to data on the cost of children; to help students understand the role of culture and economy in shaping people's perceptions of children.
Behavioral Objectives	Students might: clarify their attitudes toward having children by completing item one on the <i>Cost and Value of Children Questionnaire</i> (Data Sheet 1); analyze their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of children by completing items two and three on the questionnaire; weigh the advantages and disadvantages of children, as they see them, by completing item four on the questionnaire; estimate the cost of childrearing by completing item five on the questionnaire; compare their questionnaire responses to those of other students by completing the <i>Response Form</i> (Data Sheet 2); compare their cost estimates to actual data by discussing Data Sheets 3, 4, and 5; make inferences about the relationships between people's attitudes toward children and their social and economic backgrounds by analyzing and discussing Data Sheet 6.
Procedure	1. Ask each student to complete the <i>Cost and Value of Children Questionnaire</i> (Data Sheet 1). 2. Ask students to form small groups to discuss their responses to the questionnaire and to complete the <i>Response Form</i> (Data Sheet 2). 3. Reassemble the entire class and ask each group to report its findings. A class profile could be drawn from these reports by simply filling out a <i>Response Form</i> with data given by the groups. (This profile could be drawn using individual student responses if you want to skip step 2.)

4. Examine Data Sheets 3, 4, 5, and 6 in that order, preferably on an overhead projector. With each Data Sheet, ask students to compare their estimates with actual costs. Encourage discussion.

For a comparison with national opinions on desired family size, see the table on page 3 of *Interchange* (September 1977). The lead essay in this *Interchange* issue also gives complete explanations of *Direct* and *Indirect Costs*, as well as projected costs for a college education in the 1990's.

With Data Sheet 6 you might ask:

What strikes you most about these results?

What do you think can explain the differences between the Caucasians and the Filipinos?

Where do these groups live? How do you think they make their living?

How do you think social and economic conditions might affect people's attitudes toward children?

Which of the two groups do you think this class is closest to, based on the class profile you have just completed?

5. If you wish to pursue this topic for another class period, the *Opinions About Children Questionnaire* (Data Sheet 7) is an excellent stimulus for further analysis and discussion.

After students complete the questionnaire, you might have them *process* it by indicating—with a show of hands—how they responded to each item. Not only will this allow them to share their ideas and feelings, but it should also lead to animated discussion.

Sources: Data Sheets 3, 4, and 5 are derived from Thomas J. Espenshade, "The Value and Cost of Children," *Population Bulletin* (April 1977), Tables 15 and 16; Data Sheets 6 and 7 are excerpted from James T. Fawcett et al, *The Value of Children*, East-West Population Institute (1975), Vol. 1, Table 3.2, and Vol. 3, Appendix A.

Cost and Value of Children Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. This exercise is essentially for your own information. You will not have to share your answers with anyone else unless you choose to.

1. Would you like to have children? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, how many? ___

2. What advantages, if any, do you see in having children? In other words, what benefits and pleasures do you think you would derive from having children?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

Which of these benefits and advantages are most important to you personally? Put a 1 after the most important advantage, a 2 after the second most important advantage, and so forth.

3. What disadvantages do you see in having children? In other words, what prices do you think you would have to pay? What would you have to give up? (As above, rank your disadvantages in order of importance.)

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

Cost and Value of Children Questionnaire

Page 2

4. In general, do you think there are more advantages or more disadvantages in having children? Circle one number on the scale below.

ONLY
DIS-
ADVAN-
TAGES

ONLY
ADVAN-
TAGES

1 2 3 4 No Cop
 Outs 6 7 8 9 10

5. How much do you think the following items would cost?

a) childbirth \$ _____
b) child support through age 18 \$ _____
c) four years of college \$ _____

Total \$ _____

6. How would you rate the financial burden of having different numbers of children? (Check only one column for each number.)

No. of Children	Fairly Easy Economically	Somewhat of a financial burden	A heavy financial burden
1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____
6	_____	_____	_____

Response Form

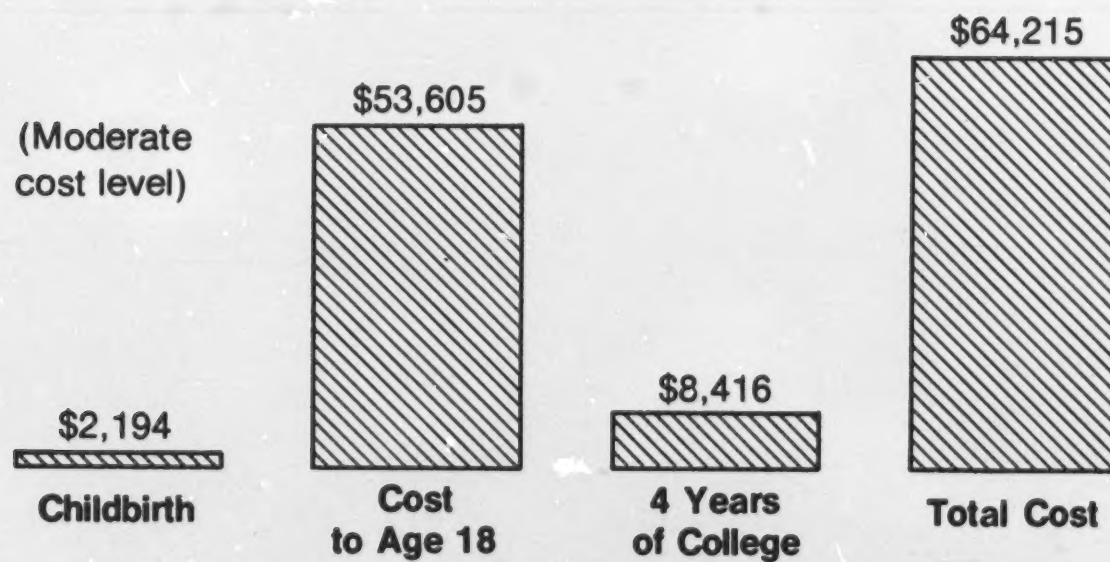
This form is designed to make it easy to collect and record individual responses to the "Cost and Value of Children" questionnaire. Simply complete each of the items below. The numbers correspond to the numbers on the questionnaire.

1. Number who want children _____ Do not want children _____
Average number of children desired _____
2. Top three advantages in order of importance:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. Top three disadvantages in order of importance:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. Group average on the advantage-disadvantage scale _____
5. Average estimates for the following items:

a. childbirth	\$ _____
b. child support through age 18	\$ _____
c. four years of college	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____
6. List the response given by the majority for each number of children.

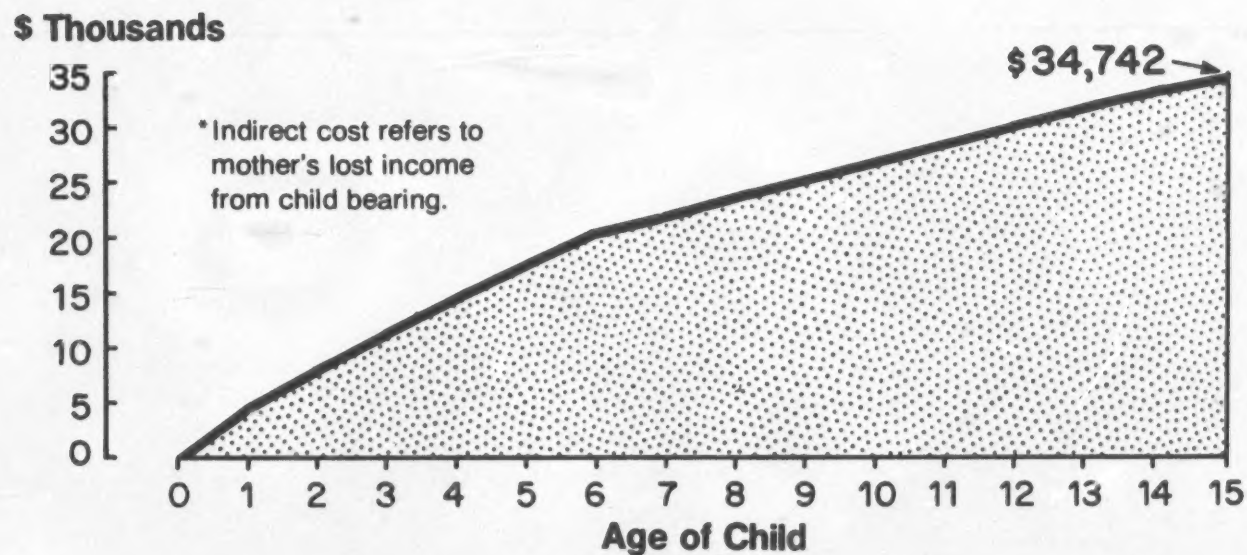
1 _____	2 _____	3 _____
4 _____	5 _____	6 _____

DIRECT COST OF A CHILD, U.S., 1977



INDIRECT COST* OF FIRST CHILD TO AGE 15

Cumulative, U.S. Average, 1977



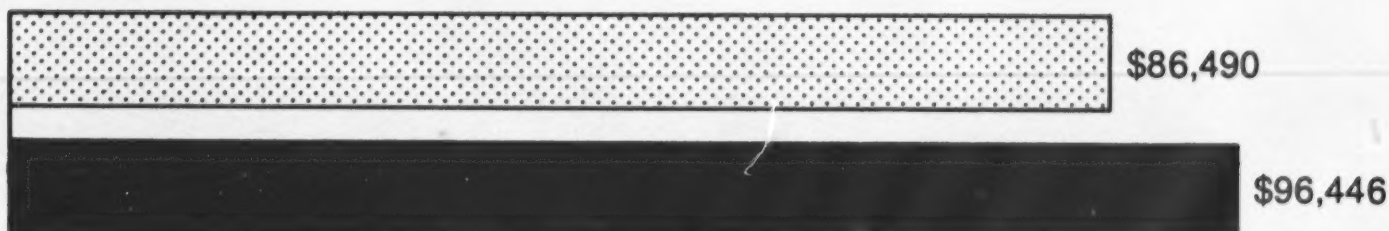
TOTAL COST* OF FIRST CHILD BY EDUCATION OF MOTHER U.S., 1977

Mother's
Education

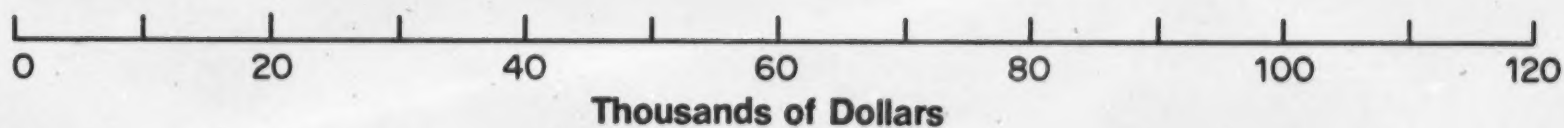
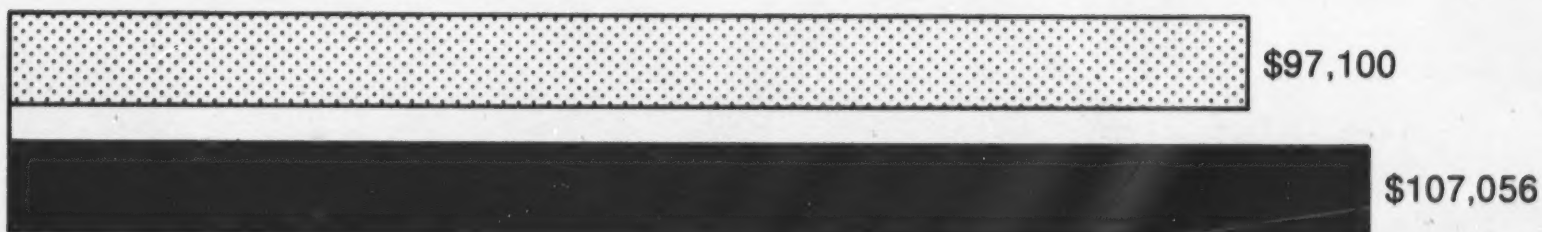
High School

4 Yrs. College

Through
Age 18



Through
4 Years
College



*Direct cost based on moderate cost estimates.

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHILDREN, HAWAII 1973

Data Sheet 6

(Percentage of respondents who mentioned specified advantages)

Advantage	Middle Class Urban White	Rural Filipino
1. Pleasure from growth, development of children	39%	0%
2. Love, affection	31	7
3. Learning from experience of childrearing	29	0
4. Children as family life, complete or close-knit family	25	4
5. Character development, responsibility, maturity, morality	25	1
6. Companionship, avoidance of loneliness	24	64
7. Play, fun with children; avoidance of boredom	23	6
8. Opportunity to teach, guide, instill values	23	0
9. Happiness for individual parent (general)	21	63
10. Help in housework, family chores; practical help	3	66
11. Unspecified help in old age	2	42

OPINIONS ABOUT CHILDREN QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond to the following opinions about children by checking one box for each statement. It might be useful if you first decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement and then decide whether you agree or disagree strongly, moderately or slightly.

Item	Agree			Disagree		
	Strong	Moderate	Slight	Strong	Moderate	Slight
(1) Caring for children is a tedious and boring job.						
(2) A good reason for having children is that they can help when parents are too old to work.						
(3) Raising children is an act of virtue.						
(4) It is only with a child that a person can feel completely free to express his love and affection.						
(5) Most married couples would be happier if they did not have any children.						
(6) Having children gives a person a special incentive to succeed in life.						
(7) It is important to have children so that the family traditions will live on.						
(8) It is only natural that a man should want children.						
(9) A couple ought to think seriously about the inconveniences caused by children before they have any.						
(10) Always having children around is a great mental strain.						
(11) Considering the pressures from family and friends, a person really doesn't have much choice about whether or not to have children.						
(12) It is a person's duty to society to have children.						
(13) All the efforts a parent makes for his children are worthwhile in the long run.						
(14) Having children makes a stronger bond between husband and wife.						
(15) One of the highest purposes of life is to have children.						

Opinions About Children Questionnaire

Item	Agree			Disagree		
	Strong	Moderate	Slight	Strong	Moderate	Slight
(16) A girl becomes a woman only after she is a mother.						
(17) It is the parents' fault if their children are not successful in life.						
(18) Having children is the most important function of marriage.						
(19) Children limit you in what you want to do and where you want to go.						
(20) Life for most people would be pretty dull without children.						
(21) A young couple is not fully accepted in the community until they have children.						
(22) After becoming a parent, a person is less likely to behave immorally.						
(23) The first thing a couple should think about when deciding to have children is whether or not they can afford it.						
(24) For most people, it is inevitable to have children.						
(25) One of the best things about having children is the true loyalty they show to their parents.						
(26) Having children causes many disagreements and problems between husband and wife.						
(27) A person with children is looked up to in the community more than a person without children.						
(28) It is only natural that a woman should want children.						
(29) Just the feeling a parent gets of being needed is enough to make having children worthwhile.						
(30) A person who has been a good parent can feel completely satisfied with his achievements in life.						

Opinions About Children Questionnaire

Item	Agree			Disagree		
	Strong	Moderate	Slight	Strong	Moderate	Slight
(31) The family with children is the basis for all that is good in our society.						
(32) Before having a child, a couple should consider whether they would rather use their money for something else.						
(33) One of the best things about being a parent is the chance to teach children what they should do and what they should not do.						
(34) A man has a duty to have children to continue the family name.						
(35) A person can feel that part of him lives on after death if he has children.						
(36) One of the best things about having children is that you are never lonely.						
(37) Raising children is a heavy financial burden for most people.						
(38) It isn't right for a couple to interfere with nature by deciding to limit the number of children they will have.						
(39) When you have children, you have to give up a lot of other things that you enjoy.						
(40) The really important things in life can be learned only from the experience of raising children.						
(41) Before having a child, a couple should consider whether it would interfere with the wife's work or not.						
(42) Having children is a sign of blessing on a marriage.						
(43) The family with children is the only place in the modern world where a person can feel comfortable and happy.						
(44) A person who has no children can never really be happy.						
(45) A boy becomes a man only after he is a father.						